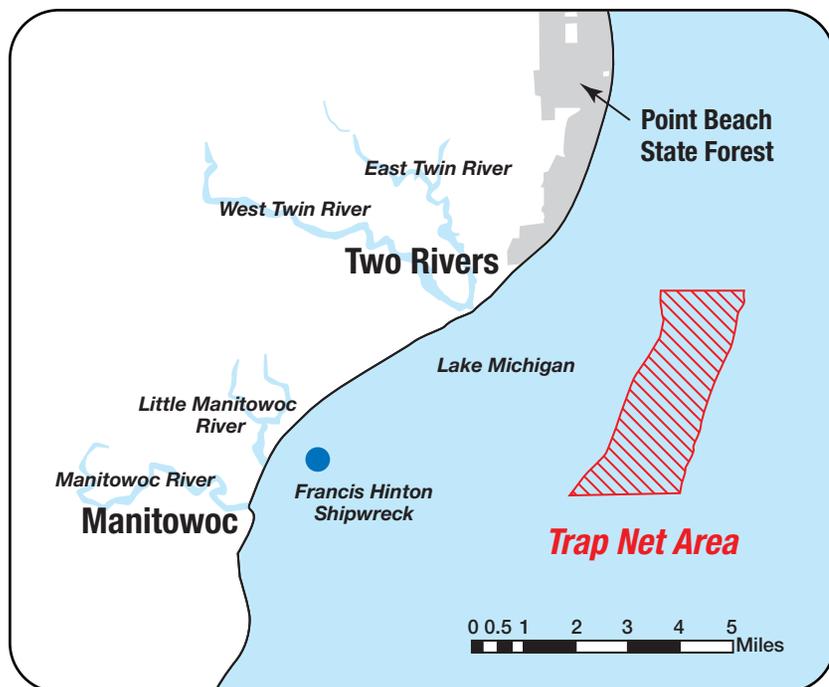
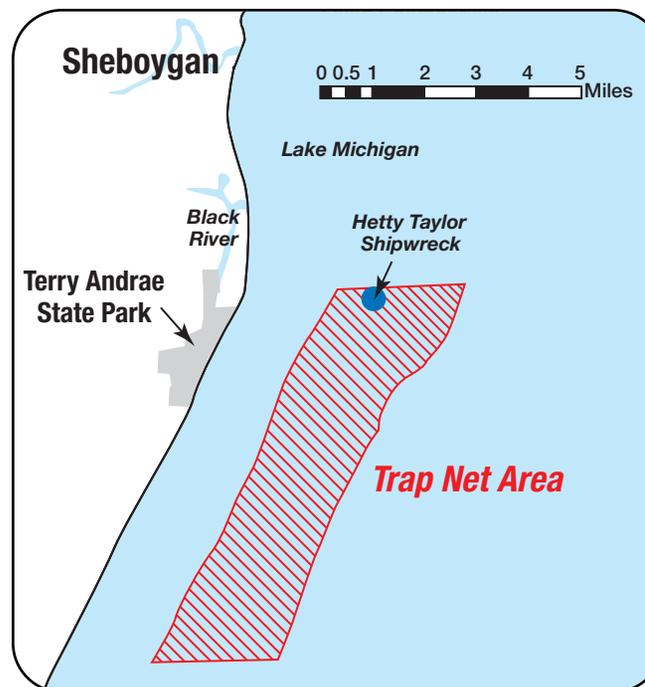


Watch Out for Trap Nets

near Two Rivers/Manitowoc and Sheboygan, Wis. • June 29th through Labor Day



Manitowoc/Two Rivers trap net area: bounded on the north by 44°8'55" latitude and on the south by 44°3'33"



Sheboygan trap net area: bounded on the north by 43°40'50" and on the south by 43°34'39"

Trap net areas:

Maps not to be used for navigation.

Commercial trap nets are used all summer in depths between 75 and 150 feet in Lake Michigan waters of Wisconsin. However, between June 29 and Labor Day the nets near Two Rivers/Manitowoc and Sheboygan are confined to two areas.

The east and west boundaries for both areas are the 150 and 75 foot contour lines, respectively.

The pot of the net may not be placed in water shallower than 75 feet or deeper than 150 feet. However, the leads may extend several hundred feet from the 75-foot contour toward shore.

How to avoid trap nets:

- Look for the flag markers and buoys marking the nets.
- Give wide berth (250 feet) when passing trap net buoys and flag markers, as nets have many anchor lines extending in all directions.
- Do not troll between or near trap net buoys, as fishing gear may easily snag the net and anchor lines.

If tangled in a trap net:

- Keep the bow of the boat facing into the waves.
- Shut off engine if prop becomes tangled.
- Snagged downrigger cables can be dangerous—release any tension on cables and cut.
- Do not enter water to untangle nets.
- If you need assistance, radio the U.S. Coast Guard.

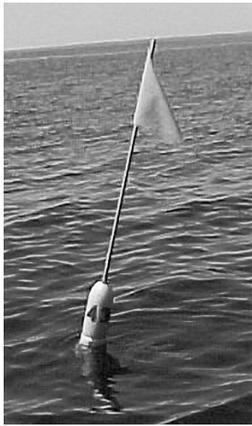
If you've lost fishing gear, note your location and contact Sea Grant. If possible, identify downrigger balls with your name and phone number so your equipment can be easily returned.

For more information, contact
University of Wisconsin
Sea Grant Institute
(920) 683-4697
www.seagrants.wisc.edu

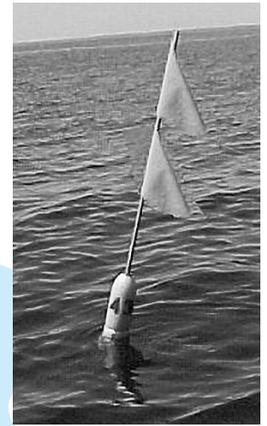
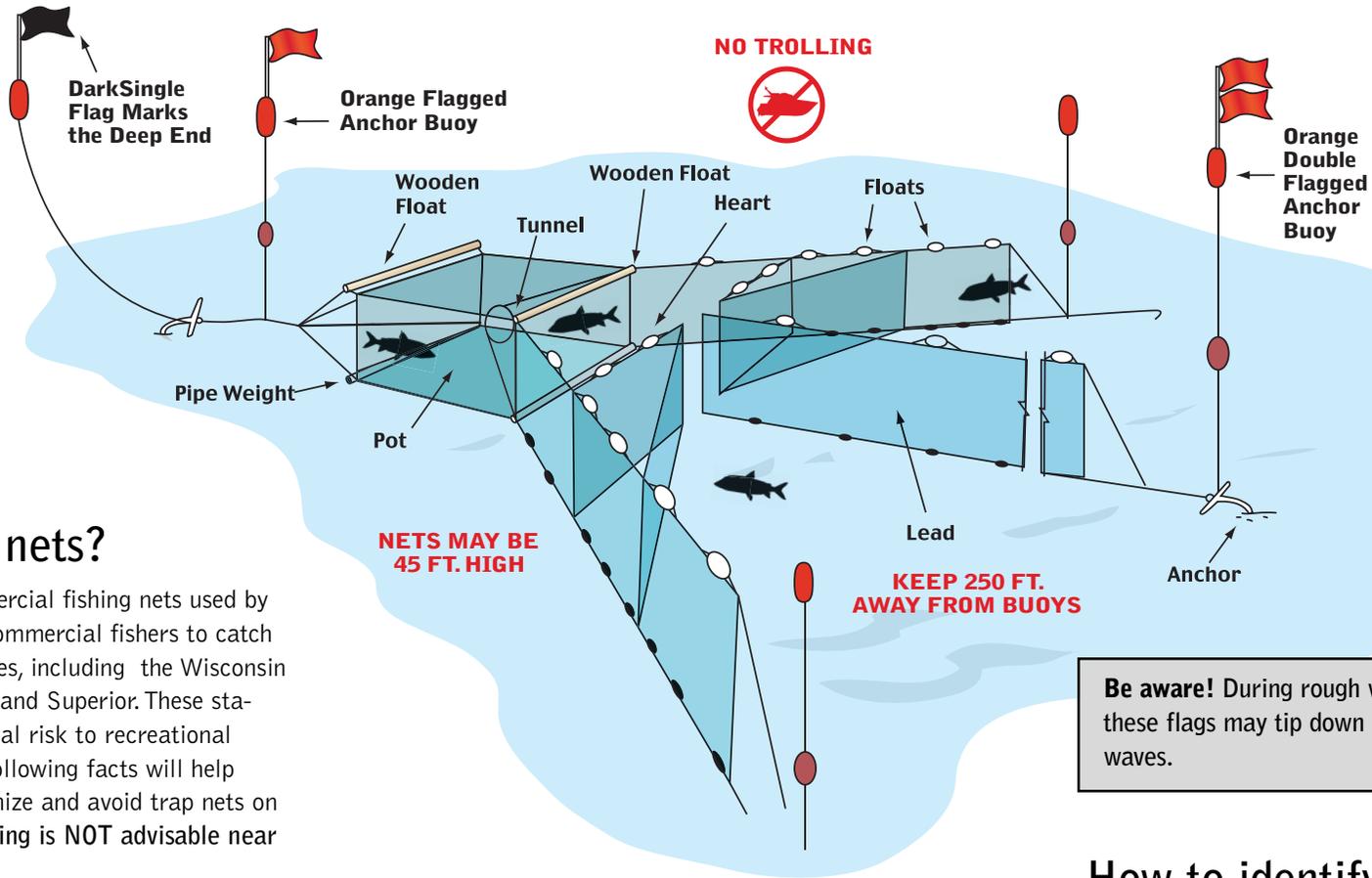


WISCU-G-03-002

Adapted with permission from "Don't Get Trapped!"
© 2002 Michigan Sea Grant



The pot-end of the net is marked with a single flag buoy.



The lead-end of the net is marked with a double flag buoy.

What are trap nets?

Trap nets are large, commercial fishing nets used by state licensed and tribal commercial fishers to catch whitefish in the Great Lakes, including the Wisconsin waters of Lakes Michigan and Superior. These stationary nets pose a potential risk to recreational boaters and anglers. The following facts will help anglers and boaters recognize and avoid trap nets on the open water. Sport trolling is NOT advisable near or above trap nets.

How do trap nets work?

Trap nets sit on the bottom of the lake. They have long leads, or sections of net, made up of thick 14-inch mesh that can be as long as 1,250 feet. These leads are visible to schooling whitefish and divert the fish into an enclosure called the heart. The heart has wings, or net sections, that form a V-shape and are supported by floats and anchors. Once inside the heart, fish swim through a tunnel and become trapped in a box-shaped pot.

Fish trapped in the pot remain alive. To harvest the fish, commercial fishers raise only the pot. Whitefish are dipped out with a long-handled net. Undersized whitefish and non-target species are returned to the water unharmed.

Bottom net placement and fish behavior of many species enables the trap net to be selective for whitefish. These nets seldom trap sport fish, such as salmon and trout. As a result, state and tribal management authorities prefer to see this type of gear in waters where sport and commercial fisheries overlap.

Trap nets may be 45 feet high and they are typically fished in water up to 150 feet deep. Once set, repositioning a trap net is a complicated process because the nets are anchored in place for extended periods of time—sometimes an entire season. On a typical fishing ground, trap nets are fished shallower in the fall and spring than in summer.

Be aware! During rough water or heavy currents, these flags may tip down or be obscured by high waves.

How to identify trap nets:

- Trap nets are generally fished perpendicular to the shoreline (from shallow to deep water). A double orange flag marks the lead, or shoreward end, of the net and a single orange flag marks the pot, or lakeward end, of the net. A dark single flag marks the deep anchor end.
- The orange flag attached to a staff buoy at the pot must be at least four feet above the surface of the water. All flags will be approximately 12 by 9 inches.
- Orange buoys mark the ends of the wings. However, anchor lines may extend another 250 feet.